

**MINUTES OF THE
NATIONAL FASTPITCH COACHES ASSOCIATION
DIVISION III CAUCUS**

December 3-4, 2015; Atlanta Marriott Marquis

NFCA Division III representative and Eastern Connecticut State University head coach Diana Pepin brought the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. ET.

1. Head Coaches Committee. Ms. Pepin provided an update for the group on the previous evening's inaugural D3 HCC meeting. Two representatives from each region will represent the greater group's interests and meet regularly via conference call .
2. Introductions. Ms. Pepin asked coaches with five years or less experience to stand, followed by coaches with 5-10 years experience, 15-20 years experience and 20-plus years experience.
3. Top 25 report. Committee chair George Wares (Central).
 - a. Mr. Wares asked coaches to let your regional rep know if you feel your team is not being considered.
 - i. Regional reps
 1. Atlantic: Keith Parr (Christopher Newport)
 2. Central: Nicole Loudin (John Carroll)
 3. East: Dale Martin (Manhattanville)
 4. Great Lakes: Kat McCreery (Illinois Wesleyan)
 5. Midwest: Mr. Wares
 6. New England: Ms. Pepin
 7. Northeast: Julie Lenhart (Cortland)
 8. West: Janae Shirley (East Texas Baptist)
 - b. The rankings are NOT a basis for NCAA consideration, ranking or tournament selection.
4. All-America report. Committee chair Cheryl Milligan (Tufts).
 - a. Ms. Milligan said the better information reps have, the better the All-America team they select will be.
 - b. Utility: Games played at position is a stat the committee will start considering during the selection process.
 - c. Ms. Milligan said the quicker coaches can get stats to NFCA D3 liaison Dave Hines, herself or their own regional rep, the better job the committee can do.
 - d. A reminder that coaches MUST vote if they nominate players to keep those players eligible for selection. You may vote for your own players in the D3 selection process.
 - e. Regional reps
 1. Atlantic: Brandon Elliott (Virginia Wesleyan)
 2. Central: Tim Syrek (Calvin)
 3. East: Lindsay Freitag (Misericordia)
 4. Great Lakes: Leslie Huntington (Wisconsin-Eau Claire)

5. Midwest: Mr. Wares
 6. New England: Ms. Milligan
 7. Northeast: Stephanie Conroy (Plattsburgh)
 8. West: Ms. Shirley
5. NFCA Hall of Fame report. D3 rep Deb Pallozzi (Ithaca).
 - a. HOF nominations are due each year by Oct. 1.
 - b. We need to get more D3 people into the NFCA Hall of Fame.
 - c. The criteria may be changing.
 - d. Committee looking at high school and travel ball coaches and how to get them involved in the nomination/selection process.
 - e. Committee discussed having a new website dedicated to NFCA Hall of Famers.
 6. NCAA Rules report. Ms. Lenhart.
 - a. Technology in the dugout ideas discussed.
 - i. TVs in the dugouts.
 - ii. Receivers/speakers in catcher's helmets.
 - iii. Technology on hold.
 - b. Bat list shorter than in past years.
 - c. Foul poles must be a contrasting color (white or optic orange) and in place by 2018.
 - d. Backstop padding is now required and can't be concrete or brick.
 - e. Links rule no longer on the table.
 - f. Contact Ms. Lenhart (julie.lenhart@cortland.edu or 607-753-5712) if you have questions and she'll either tell you what the rule is or find out the answer for you.
 - g. Terry Burdette (Hood College) sought thoughts on potential addition of a safety base on behalf of NFCA Rules Committee.
 - i. Straw poll in room showed no one in favor of the safety base.
 - h. Safety netting in dugout.
 - i. Make it six feet above playing surface?
 - ii. Current rule is six feet above dugout floor. Some fields have sunken dugouts, making that height something quite different.
 - iii. Doesn't have to be entire dugout, just allow a safe area where you aren't going to be hit with a ball.
 7. Kris Herman (Williams) noted that it is important for coaches that serve on NCAA committees to bring back from those meetings cost concerns. It isn't as simple or easy as it may sound (to ADs and other administrators) for schools to make changes.
 8. NCAA Championships report. Jan Gentry (Asst. Director of Championships).
 - a. 2015 review.
 - i. Championship was a 62-team tournament, with 16 regional sites (14 four-team sites and two three-team sites) and eight super regionals. Finals were at Moyer Sports Complex in Salem, Va. Tufts was national champion, while Texas-Tyler was runner-up.

- b. East Region rep position on NCAA D3 Softball Committee will be filled in the next couple weeks.
- c. 407 institutions sponsor D3 softball and are eligible for the championship.
- d. Based on the 1:6.5 D3 team sport access ratio, Ms. Gentry reported that the softball committee will request the NCAA Championships Committee approve an increase in the field size to 63 for 2017.
- e. 2016 NCAA Championship field.
 - i. 62 teams.
 - ii. 43 Pool A (automatic qualifier) berths, up one from 2015 to reflect adding Southern Athletic Association AQ.
 - iii. One Pool B (independent) berth.
 - iv. 18 Pool C (at large) berths.
 - v. Important dates.
 - 1. Selections: Sunday, May 8.
 - 2. Regionals: May 13-15.
 - 3. Super Regionals: May 20-21.
 - 4. Championship: May 26-31 at Moyer Sports Complex, Salem, Va. Hosted by Old Dominion Athletic Conference and city of Salem.
- f. Committee nomination process.
 - i. Three positions coming open (Great Lakes, Midwest and New England). Two of the three must be administrators.
 - ii. CCC, IIAC and WIAC not eligible (same conference can't serve consecutive terms).
 - iii. Self-nominations were accepted. Deadline was Dec. 4.
- g. Future NCAA Championship dates.
 - i. 2017: Selections on May 7, Regionals on May 12-14, Super Regionals on May 19-20 and Championship on May 25-30 (Oklahoma City at ASA Hall of Fame Stadium).
 - ii. 2018: Selections on May 6, Regionals on May 11-13, Super Regionals on May 18-19 and Championship on May 24-29 (Oklahoma City at ASA Hall of Fame Stadium).
 - iii. 2019: Selections on May 5, Regionals on May 10-12, Super Regionals on May 17-18 and Championship on May 23-28 (site TBA).
- h. Bid process for 2019-2022 NCAA Championship hosts.
 - i. June 2016: Bid portal opens.
 - ii. August 2016: Bids due.
 - iii. December 2016: Site selection announcement.
- i. D3 Championships Committee Actions.
 - i. Continued monitoring of cost of super regional format.
 - 1. Feedback has been positive.
 - 2. Travel expenses were lower than expected.
 - a. Site rep, umpire costs are up, but overall costs are down.

- ii. Approved budget reductions (effective 2014-15).
 1. Reduce travel party size by 10 percent for team sports.
 2. Reduce per diem rate by \$5 (to \$90).
 3. Eliminate per diem provided to host institutions.
 4. Eliminate host honorarium for non-predetermined sites.
 5. Teams ranked for regional rankings: Flexibility to rank 15-21 percent per region, no minimum (instead of 15 percent per region, minimum of six) to allow more equitable group of ranked teams.
 6. Southern Athletic Association AQ effective for 2015-16.
 7. Great South Athletic Conference dissolving, effective 2016-17, which could bring Pool B berths back to two for 2017.
- iii. Proposed increase to dues for D3 schools to offset costs.
- j. 2016 NCAA Softball Committee Annual Meeting.
 - i. The committee will meet June 20-22 in Indianapolis. If you have issues that you would like the committee to discuss, please forward them in writing to Ms. Gentry (jgentry@ncaa.org or 317-917-6626) by June 10.

9. Issues forum.

- a. Get feedback on 16 regionals—8 supers—finals.
 - i. Wait to seed 16 teams until after regionals?
 - ii. But can't create flights.
 - iii. Essentially reseeding.
- b. Share how teams are bracketed to build on mock ranking exercise done with Ms. Gentry during second day of D3 caucus at 2014 NFCA National Convention to help coaches better understand the process.
- c. Also ranking of umpires.
- d. Non-conference strength of schedule.
 - i. Idea of separating out non-conference strength from in-conference.
 - ii. Ms. Lenhart asked if a column could be added to list games against out of conference ranked teams.
 - iii. Ms. Gentry said teams get credit for ANY ranked team, so regions that rank more teams provide more opportunities for games against ranked teams.
- e. Anita Kubicka (Montclair State) said web streaming of NCAA Championship has been great. NCAA provides webcasts for only finals, but it is expected that host schools during earlier rounds do a webcast of games at their location.
- f. The 62 tournament teams are selected and THEN host bids are considered.
 - i. Joe Kinsella (Lake Forest) said that they hosted regionals and super regionals and would consider NOT hosting again, based on cost.

- g. NCAA Management Council is considering dropping games in baseball and softball from 40 games to 35.
 - i. Marie Curran (Buffalo State) is chairing a D3 HCC subcommittee to address the proposed reduction.
 - ii. Ms. Pepin noted there are significant differences in baseball and softball, one being less missed class time.
 - iii. HCC preparing five bullet points to forward to representatives attending NCAA Convention.
 - 1. Among items that help separate baseball and softball:
 - a. Days of competition. Softball does it in 20 days, while there's 32 days for baseball.
 - b. How many days a week baseball and softball teams play.
 - c. Average start time (i.e. noon for baseball, 3 p.m. for softball)
 - 2. Straw polls.
 - a. How many schools have lights? One-third.
 - b. How many use them more than twice? A few.
 - c. Who wants to reduce games? No one.
 - d. Who filled out NCAA survey sent to coaches (also sent to FARs, ADs and student-athletes)? Most everyone.
 - 3. Some schools have baseball and softball teams travel together. For softball teams, that could mean watching baseball team warm up for two hours, go play their games, then come back and watch baseball finish up.
 - iv. Reason for discussion: Reducing missed class time.
 - v. Changing competition season.
 - 1. Reasoning:
 - 2. Pro: Better weather in the fall.
 - 3. Con: Problems with staffing (SIDs, trainers, events personnel)
 - 4. Con: Problems with student-athletes that need to student teach or who compete in a fall sport.
 - vi. If games are reduced from 40 to 35, teams may only get in 30 games, where teams are getting on average 36 games now, which is already where the proposed reduction would be.
 - vii. The last two weeks of the season, teams will cram in 25 percent of their games (games previously cancelled due to poor weather) to get them completed.
 - viii. Mr. Wares said if we have student-athletes saying they want to keep the same amount of games, that says a lot. We need to have the right people speaking up for us to people that may not know as well how softball works. Those speakers could be, among others, coaches, administrators and SAAC members.

10. Leadoff Classics. NFCA has adopted a two-year model for its Leadoff Classics (instead of every three years). The Junior College and NAIA events will be paired together and alternate playing at South Commons Complex in Columbus, Ga., while D3 and D2 will alternate years at sites around the country chosen by their respective division (not anchored in one spot). There will be two events, D3 or D2 and JC or NAIA, each year starting in 2017.
11. Salary Survey. Penny Siqueiros (Emory) has spearheaded an effort for a D3 salary survey. "You're worth it!"
 - a. Provide information to better speak about salary issues at schools.
 - b. Run risk of losing good coaches if we don't compensate them properly.
 - c. What is the balance of your time as a "full-time" employee with respect to time devoted to softball? 70/30? 80/20? 50/50?
 - d. Plan is for survey to be sent out to D3 membership in January.
 - e. Results will be posted in the Coach's Box at NFCA.org for D3 members and distributed to division head coaches via email.
12. NCAA Academic/Membership Affairs.
 - a. Ten proposals, some of which don't apply to softball.
 - b. Go to NCAA.org — D3 — Governance to see proposals and other documents.
 - c. Proposals that DO apply to softball:
 - i. NCAA member fees increased to \$2,000 (from \$900) for D3 schools.
 - ii. NCAA member fees increased to \$1,000 (from \$450) for D3 conferences.
 - iii. Currently 3.18 percent of budget goes to D3. If proposal is approved, 100 percent would go to D3.
 - iv. Communications.
 1. Talking about social media procedures.
 - v. On-campus contacts.
 1. Athletes can come to campus when playing nearby (but not being played on that campus).
 - vi. Championship ineligibility for banned drugs.
 - vii. Automatic qualification for provisional/reclassifying members.
 - viii. You can not meet with your team in a leadership experience (the whole athletic department must be included).
 - ix. Allowed to have a meeting about softball stuff the week of fall season or anytime during spring season.
 - d. In discussion by NCAA Management Council.
 - i. Split season.
 1. 25-30 percent in fall, the rest in spring.
 2. Cons: Student teaching, two-sport athletes, disjointed flow of season.
13. Special Olympics.
 - a. Activities are within the D3 model.

- i. Ms. Pepin said her school “adopted” a 54-year-old male (this was his sixth season with the team), who comes to practices.
 - 1. She suggested forming a subcommittee to discuss:
 - a. Schools supporting Special Olympic teams and individual athletes.
 - b. Hosting a Special Olympics event.
 - c. Coming up with a points system to crown a champion for Special Olympics activism.

14. Softball hot topics.

- a. D1 wants four umpires for their games.
- b. Ms. Herman said it is incredibly important to have a voice. Decisions made by other groups (D1) may not take into account or understand how decisions at their level impact other groups (i.e. those that don’t have the same financial resources).

15. NCAA Secretary-Rules Editor report. Vickie Van Kleeck.

- a. Please see attached supplement for complete presentation.
- b. March-April is NCAA call for rule proposals.
 - i. Must be on HUB yourself (not your assistant), because that’s where the information and forms are.
 - ii. <https://sup.arbitersports.com>
- c. Contact information for Ms. Van Kleeck:
 - i. ncaasbsre@gmail.com
 - ii. 540-819-4655

16. Umpires report. Donna Vavrinec, national coordinator.

- a. Strike zone.
 - i. It is a work in progress.
 - ii. Call the strike zone that is in the rule book.
 - iii. Will some umpires give you a low strike? Yes.
 - iv. Will some umpires call it exactly in the rule book? Yes.
 - v. Ms. Vavrinec said that umpires do a disservice come postseason if they don’t call the strike zone as in the rule book. “I didn’t have that called all year!”
 - vi. Ms. Vavrinec stresses calling the strike zone that is in the rule book.
 - vii. Coaches/host sites are responsible for the lines on the field being correct (i.e. batter’s box).
- b. Umpires are being told to watch for clues.
 - i. Are players crowding the plate (toeing the line and out over the plate)?
 - ii. Are players wearing a lot of armor (which could be a sign they get hit a lot)?
- c. Rely on umpire judgment.
- d. Umpires may ask you to redraw the batter’s box lines.
- e. Going for help.
 - i. Usually dealing with a two-man crew (but even with a three-man crew), stay focused ... don’t bail on the call.

- ii. Look at what the barrel of the bat is doing.
 - f. Three in-person umpire clinics in January.
 - i. Atlanta.
 - ii. San Jose.
 - iii. Indianapolis (which will be recorded).
 - g. Submit to Ms. Vavrinec a list of 10 umpires that are postseason worthy.
 - h. Keep in mind that umpires have to adjust to batter's height, but can't go lower than the catcher's helmet (and look through it).
 - i. Contact information for Ms. Vavrinec:
 - i. dvavrinec@comcast.net
- 17. Adjournment. The first day of the caucus adjourned at 11:40 a.m.
- 18. Tournament selection session. The optional second day of the caucus from 8-8:45 a.m. on Dec. 4 was utilized for a tournament selection exercise led by Ms. Gentry.
 - a. After NCAA tournament field is picked, the committee then looks at the potential hosts list.
 - b. Primary criteria for selection.
 - i. Win-loss percentage.
 - ii. D3 head-to-head.
 - iii. Results versus common opponents.
 - iv. Results versus D3, as established by rankings at time of selection.
 - v. D3 strength of schedule:
 - 1. 2/3 opponents' winning percentage and 1/3 opponents' opponents winning percentage.
 - c. Secondary criteria for selection:
 - i. Non-D3 win-loss percentage.
 - ii. Results versus common non-D3 opponents.
 - d. Optional selection criteria (must be approved by D3 Championships committee):
 - i. Win-loss percentage for last 25 percent of games (not used by softball committee).
 - ii. Strength of schedule multiplier.
 - e. Coaches' polls are NOT used by committee as criteria.
 - f. In-region competition requirement (70 percent).
 - i. Any contest against school within membership region.
 - ii. Any contest versus school within established sport region.
 - iii. Conference games.
 - iv. Schools within 150-mile radius.
 - v. Schools in any year of the provisional or reclassifying process into D3.
 - vi. Exempt all games on one vacation period (i.e. spring break).
 - vii. Postseason may NOT be used to meet the requirement.
 - viii. Scrimmages/exhibition games should not be included.

- ix. The 70 percent requirement is based on the INITIAL schedule submitted by the institution.
- g. Pairing and site selection.
 - i. Teams grouped in clusters according to natural geographic proximity, then geographic proximity (within 500 miles) team can be moved to numerically balance the bracket if proximity is maintained (no flights created).
 - ii. Building pods of four (or three).
 - iii. Site criteria.
 - 1. Quality of facilities (and hotels).
 - 2. Location.
 - 3. Seeding.
 - 4. Attendance history and attendance potential.
 - iv. Assignment of teams.
 - 1. Minimize flights.
 - 2. Consideration of travel time, expenses and missed class time.
 - 3. Balancing relative strength of bracket.
 - v. Additional considerations.
 - 1. Goal of not requiring teams to travel more than two time zones.
 - 2. Avoid driving past a site to reach assigned site.
 - 3. Consideration for travel/site assignment in previous years (i.e. try not to send a team on a 450-mile trip in consecutive years).
 - 4. Teams may be seeded on regional basis using the selection criteria. Geographic proximity takes priority over seeding.
 - 5. Teams from same conference do not have to play one another in the first contest of the first round as long as geographic proximity is maintained (but could meet in regional final).
 - 6. The highest seeded team that meets all selection criteria will be selected as the host, provided geographic proximity is maintained.
 - 7. Typically the two highest-ranked teams in each region are selected to host (if they submitted bids to host and meet all the criteria).
 - 8. 14 four-team brackets.
 - 9. Two three-team brackets.
 - 10. Teams are assigned to regional sites based primarily on geographic proximity. Each regional is seeded (#1 plays #4 and #2 plays #3).
 - 11. Minor adjustments are made to balance the relative strength of the brackets (regionally-ranked teams and automatic qualifiers).

12. The seeding is adjusted if necessary to avoid conference matchups in the first contest of regionals.
13. Regional sites are paired for super regionals.
 - a. Flights must still be minimized. Typically there are two hosts from each region and those two regional sites are paired for supers. The committee will review who submitted super regional bids.
14. Finals bracket seeds teams at finals site by their ranking in region.
15. Regionals with non-Sunday competition team will follow a Thursday-Saturday format.
16. Ms. Hartl said it's really easy to put a bid in, so if you have a thought to host, put in the paperwork.

19. Reseeding discussion.

- a. After regionals, seed the advancing teams (1-16) using online score-reporting system updated with regional results. Follow traditional bracketing principles (#1 vs. #16, #2 vs. #15, etc.).
- b. The bracket must follow minimum number of flights possible for the eight matchups. Seeding may need to be adjusted to minimize flights.
- c. Use non-conference strength of schedule.
- d. Mr. Wares noted that there never will be a perfect solution, but reseeding gets closest to that ideal.
- e. Straw poll: Many saw advantages to doing it.

Action Items:

- Let a member of the NFCA Top 25 committee know if you feel your team is not being represented.
- Contact your respective NFCA All-America Committee regional rep if you want to be on the subcommittee choosing the NFCA All-Region squad.
- Keep nominating qualified Division III individuals for the NFCA Hall of Fame.
- Contact Ms. Van Kleeck if you have a rules question.
- Contact Ms. Vavrinec if you have an umpire question or issue.
- Contact Ms. Gentry if you have issues you'd like discussed by the NCAA Softball Committee at its meeting.